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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to answer the basic question: What is the gap between published articles on black admissions and actual practices in the schools? Eighty-seven (90 percent sample) large, primarily white institutions returned questionnaires concerning their admissions policies for black students. Results indicated that very few blacks (3 percent of 1969 entering freshmen) are entering the large, primarily white universities. While many schools have established special programs for blacks, the admissions procedures used for these programs and for regular black admissions remain very traditional. Standardized tests and high school grades are widely used while extra-curricular activities, recommendations and interviews are less used in black admissions. While many schools are conducting research on black admissions there is little reason to expect that admissions policies towards blacks in predominantly white schools will change in the near future. It is proposed that research on black admissions should involve novel approaches to developing predictors and criteria rather than to apply white culturally-bound variables to groups of blacks. Potentially useful variables in predicting the academic success of blacks include a positive self-concept and low conformity. (Author)

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College Admissions and The Black Student: Results of a National Survey

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Research Report 1-70

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to answer the basic question: What is the gap between published articles on black admissions and actual practices in the schools? Eighty-seven (90% sample) large, primarily white institutions returned questionnaires concerning their admissions policies for black students. Results indicated that very few blacks (3% of 1969 entering freshmen) are entering the large, primarily white universities. While many schools have established special programs for blacks, the admissions procedures used for these programs and for regular black admissions remain very traditional. Standardized tests and high school grades are widely used while extra-curricular activities, recommendations and interviews are less used in black admissions. While many schools are conducting research on black admissions there is little reason to expect that admissions policies towards blacks in predominantly white schools will change in the near future. The authors propose that research on black admissions should involve novel approaches to developing predictors and criteria rather than to apply white culturally-bound variables to groups of blacks. Potentially useful variables in predicting the academic success of blacks include a positive self-concept and low conformity.

The admission of blacks into colleges and universities has been widely discussed in the literature (e.g., Gordon and Wilkerson, 1966; Jencks and Riesman, 1968; Egerton, 1969). Researchers have also conducted numerous studies on predictors of success of black students in higher education (e.g., Stanley and Porter, 1967; Cleary, 1968; Blumenfeld, 1969; Bartlett and O'Leary, 1969). With all this concern about black admissions there remain some questions: How many blacks are being admitted to colleges and universities? On what bases are they being admitted? How many special programs exist for black students? Are institutions studying their black admissions policies? In short, what is the gap between published articles on black admissions and actual practices in the schools? The purpose of this study was to answer the above and related questions.

METHOD

The admissions offices of 97 colleges and universities were sent a questionnaire concerning their black admissions policies (see Appendix). The institutions sampled were large, primarily white, institutions throughout the United States. Questionnaires were mailed out in November, 1969. Telephone follow-up procedures resulted in a total return of 87 questionnaires (90%).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the range, total enrollment and black enrollment by six geographical regions for schools in the sample. The regions are based on the regional accrediting associations reported in the Higher

Education Directory of the United States Office of Education. The median total enrollment was 10,800, while freshman enrollment was 2,392 and median black freshman enrollment was 64. The median percent of black freshmen was 3%.

TABLE 1

Range and Frequency of Enrollments for 87 Schools by Geographical Locations (Question 1)

Schools by Region	N	Range of Total Enrollment	Median Total Enrollment	Median Freshman Enrollment	Median Black Freshman Enrollment	Median* Percent of Black Freshman Enrollment
North Central	31	4,500-38,979	13,750	3,050	115	3
Southern	19	2,200-30,177	11,142	2,465	24	2
Middle States	16	1,950-32,477	7,000	1,850	85	6
Northwest	11	1,573-23,618	7,000	1,887	20	1
New England	6	5,400-14,300	7,400	1,990	23	1
Western	4	6,200-30,500	12,750	2,121	75	5
Total	87	1,573-38,979	10,800	2,392	64	3

*All percents rounded off to whole percent.

TABLE 2

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 87 Schools
(Question 2)

Schools by Region	N	Admissions Criteria: Open Admissions	High School GPA	High School Rank	SAT	ACT	CEEB Achvment tests	State or Local Exams	Extra curr. Activities	Recommendations	Interview	Predicted GPA
North Central	31	4	12	16	9	9	2		1	5		
Southern	19	1	7	11	13	3	4	2		2	1	3
Middle States	16		8	8	10			2	1	3		2
Northwest	11	4	6		3	2				1		3
New England	6			5	4		2					
Western	4		3		3		2	1				
Total	87	9	36	40	42	14	10	5	2	11	1	8

Eighty-six of the 87 schools reported using either high school average (HSA) or high school rank (HSR) combined with the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT). Very few, however, reported using extracurricular activities, recommendations or interviews. Only five schools reported using as many as four admissions criteria. No Western or Northwest schools reported using HSR and no New England schools reported using HSA. Generally, Middle States schools required higher SAT scores than any other region.

TABLE 3

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 87 Schools to Select Black Students to Special Programs (Question 3)

Schools by Region	Admissions Criteria											
	N	Spec. Programs N	High School GPA	High School Rank	SAT	ACT	CEEB Achv-ment tests	State or Local Exams	Extra curr. Activ-ities	Recom-menda-tions	In-ter-view	Pre-dicted GPA
North Central	31	13	7	6	7	3	1			4	3	
Southern	19	5	2	3	3			2		1		2
Middle States	16	14	8	7	9			2	1	7	3	1
Northwest	11	5	4		2	1				2	2	
New England	6	4	1	3	2		1			3	1	
Western	4	1	1		1					1		
Totals	87	42	23	19	24	4	2	4	1	18	9	3

Forty-two (48%) of 87 schools reported having special programs in which black or mostly black students were admitted. Twenty-four schools used regular admissions criteria for special ~~program~~ students. In addition, nine required summer school, three required special academic course arrangements, and two required five years instead of four years to complete the degree program. Generally, the same combination of regular admissions criteria was used to select black students to special programs. However, more schools used either extra-curricular activities, recommendations or interviews for special program admissions than for regular admissions. Fourteen of the 16 Middle States schools had special programs as did four of the six New England schools.

TABLE 4

Frequencies of Different Bases of Regular Admissions Criteria Used by 87 Schools to Select Black Students (Question 4)

Schools by Region	Admissions Criteria										
	N	High School GPA	High School Rank	SAT	ACT	CEEB Achv-ment Tests	State or Local Exams	Extra curr. Activ-ities	Recom-menda-tions	In-ter-view	Pre-dicted GPA
North Central	31	7	5	7	3				4	1	
Southern	19	3	1	3		1	1		1		
Middle States	16	5	7	9			1	1	6	2	1
Northwest	11	5	1	3	1				3	2	
New England	6		5	4		2			3		
Western	4	2		3			1		1		
Totals	87	22	19	29	4	3	3	1	18	5	1

Thirty-nine (45%) of the 87 schools reported using different admissions criteria to select black students. In addition, six required summer school and 14 required special academic course arrangements. The term "different bases of admission" was generally interpreted by admissions officers as referring to different applications or cutoff points of the same variables used in regular admissions (e.g., standardized tests and high school performance). Generally the differences were lower cutoffs or other uses of the variables.

Additionally, a number of schools employed extra-curricular activities, recommendations or interviews as admissions criteria for blacks.

DISCUSSION

Generally, we see that very few blacks are entering the large, primarily white universities. This study found a three percent black freshman enrollment which compares with a two percent black total undergraduate enrollment reported in Egerton's (1969) survey (80 schools) and one percent shown in the Chronicle of Higher Education, 1969 (87 schools). Egerton's and the Chronicle of Higher Education figures are for the 1968-69 school year.

While many schools have established special programs, perhaps to attract black students, the admissions procedures used for these programs and for regular black admissions remain very traditional. Standardized tests and HSR and HSA are widely used while extra-curricular activities, recommendations, and interviews are less used in black admissions. Only eight schools out of 87 indicated using community resources in the admission of blacks.

Despite the possibility that general ability tests may be discriminatory against blacks (e.g., Clark and Plotkin, 1964; Krug, 1966; Cleary, 1968), more schools use such tests to select blacks than use HSA or HSR. Sixty-nine percent of the schools with special programs used either SAT or ACT for admission to the special program.

Several schools indicated some confusion regarding terminology used in the questionnaire. Several respondents made it clear that black students and disadvantaged are not the same, and others pointed out their color-blind policy of admissions eliminated the need for any attention to the admission of black students.

There is little reason to expect that admissions policies towards

blacks in predominantly white schools will change in the near future. It would appear that until more is known about the useful indices developed from the black students' backgrounds, no new perspectives regarding their admissions to universities is possible. This is evident by the great similarity between "new" special programs, admissions policies and regular admissions criteria. However, 53 (61%) of the schools in this survey reported that admissions research on the black student is being conducted at their institutions.

Whether this research will involve any novel approaches to developing predictors and performance criteria for black students is unknown. The hope is that it will not follow the course of most black admissions research done so far; that of applying the same white culturally-bound variables to groups of blacks. However, two variables worthy of further study as well as experimental implementation in schools are self-concept and conformity. Self-concept has been positively related to the academic performance of blacks and conformity has been negatively related to black performance (Brookover, et al. 1967; Epps, 1969).

Perhaps an annual survey of black admissions procedures can help clarify existing practices and ultimately help close some of the gap between knowledge and practice.

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The Chronicle of Higher Education, Washington, D.C., April, 1969.

APPENDIX

BLACK ADMISSIONS QUESTIONNAIRE
American College Personnel Association

(Please provide your best approximation where data are not immediately available.)

1. What is your approximate undergraduate enrollment?_____. About how many new freshmen did you admit this fall?_____. About how many new freshmen are black?_____.

2. Briefly describe your regular bases for admission of new freshmen (or attach or enclose a description). Please be as specific as possible.

3. Do you have special programs into which blacks (or mostly blacks) are admitted? ___Yes ___No. If yes, please briefly describe the bases for admission to the program(s).

4. Do you use any different bases for admitting blacks under your regular new freshmen admission program? ___Yes ___No. If yes, please briefly describe the bases for black admission.

5. Do you wish to receive summaries or research reports of the black admission experiences of other schools? ___Yes ___No. If you wish to include any summaries or reports of your own, please do so.

6. Is your office engaged in any systematic research on black student admission? ___Yes ___No.

7. Is there any other office on or off campus doing such research? ___Yes ___no. Please note their name and address.

NAME_____ NAME_____

TITLE_____ TITLE_____

ADDRESS_____ ADDRESS_____

_____ _____

8. Please make any comments on the back or enclose any other pertinent materials. Thank you for your cooperation.